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Service members, Civilians conquer toughest 10 Miler in Afghanistan.

Qalat, Afghanistan- More than 90 U.S. and Romanian service members, along with civilians, from Combined Team Zabul signed up to test their running prowess during the Forward Operating Base Lagman Army 10-Miler Shadow Run on Sunday, October 24. Soldiers from the 2D Stryker Cavalry Regiment and their fellow runners pitted their strength and stamina in a race that can arguably be described as one of the toughest courses in Afghanistan.

The FOB Lagman run was one of six official shadow runs held throughout Afghanistan. The main Army 10-Miler is held along the streets of Washington D.C. and is considered the largest annual race of its length. Participation in the Shadow Run was not for the faint of heart and presented each runner with some difficult terrain to navigate.

In addition to cold and windy weather conditions, runners had to fight the altitude running at 5,300 feet above sea level. The course was a tough and rocky one which included a hill with a 23 percent grade that competitors had to tackle not once, but six times in both directions.

“It was probably the most difficult 10 miles I have run in my life,” said a breathless Sgt. David Mecham, the first U.S. Soldier to cross the finish line. “In my life, I have run about 30 or 40 of these races

and this was the toughest one so far.” Mecham said two of the toughest obstacles during the race were the cold weather and the mountainous terrain. “There was one really long gradual hill and three really steep short ones. The long gradual hill was probably the worse one. The three short ones were pretty bad, but you could recover quickly from them,” Mecham said describing the course. He finished the race with a time of 1:08:22 and dedicated his run to his wife Gina and daughter Veronica.

The 812th Battalion Carpathian Hawks from Romania dominated the top three places overall. Corporal Ioan Suciu came in first with a time of 1:02:58, Corporal Mihai Muresan took second with 1:04:16 and Staff Sgt. Claudiu Suciu took third with a time of 1:05:52. “The altitude and the hills made it a very difficult race,” said Ioan Suciu the overall first place champion. “The first laps were the hardest and the other competitors made for a very close race.”

There was a tie for first in the women’s category. Finishing the race with a time of 1:22:32 were 1st Lieutenants Tiffany Monaco and Cinthia Baustista. Both said they have run the 10-miler in Washington D.C. and that the run this year was much harder.

Top honors in the 40 and Over Masters category went to civilian contractor Danny Harrel. The 61-year-old finished the race with a time of 1:30:40 and a very sunny disposition. “It was a great run and a beautiful day for it,” Harrell said. “It was 10 miles, but the weather was great.”

In the end, only 61 of the original 95 runners to sign up for the competition completed the full race ,proving that the Army 10-Mile shadow run at FOB Lagman has truly earned the title of, “Toughest Race in Afghanistan.”



Pushing Through: Sgt. David Mecham of the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment crosses the finish line after what he described as the most grueling 10-mile race he has ever run. Mecham was the first U.S. Soldier to finish the race.



Victory: Two Navy Sailors and one Army Master Sergeant Jeffrey K. St. John tackle a big hill during the Army 10-Miler Shadow Run at FOB Lagman.